

(Name of Project)

by
(Name of First Writer)

(Based on, If Any)

Revisions by
(Names of Subsequent Writers,
in Order of Work Performed)

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SHORTY MORTY

by

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FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Agent "SHORTY" MORTY ROSENTHAL, obnoxious, bald and very short, lies back in his big leather chair at his long walnut desk.

Eyes closed, he smiles as he day-dreams of the woman he loves.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

(à la M-G-M's Pete Smith)

Shorty Morty Rosenthal loved the tall LaVonne. He worshipped at the altar of her long downy legs. He hopped up and down to behold her smooth cleavage. He swam in the pool green of her eyes. Day-dreamed of swinging from her shiny blonde tresses, imagined her red nails lost in the hair of his back, longed to lick down the fuzz on her well-turned arms. In short, Shorty Morty had LaVonne van Royale for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: "MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1945"

INT. OFFICE - DAY

With worry on his face, Shorty Morty paces back and forth on top of his desk.

His secretary, KATYA SMIRNOV, fifty-ish yet still attractive, puts her note pad in her lap.

KATYA

(Russian accent)

Morty, when you walk on your desk you look silly.

Morty steps begrudgingly into his leather chair and sits engulfed by it.

SHORTY MORTY

LaVonne is perfect for the RKO part if Sy Gold doesn't plug his carrot top.

KATYA
LaVonne lisps.

SHORTY MORTY
Karloff lisps.

KATYA
He's already famous.

SHORTY MORTY
Marie McDonald would swap her body
for LaVonne's.

KATYA
You neglect your other clients.

Morty gets up and walks over to the big window that looks
down on the Sunset Strip.

SHORTY MORTY
LaVonne can act.

KATYA
LaVonne couldn't play a tree in
Hansel and Gretel.

Morty gets back onto his desk. He points a short finger at
Katya.

SHORTY MORTY
Tell RKO that van Royale will read
for the part. Tell them that.

Katya gets up and leaves the room, her jaw set.

She closes the door strongly.

SHORTY MORTY (CONT'D)
God-damned outspoken Russians.
(beat)
I should fire her.

Morty gets into his chair, reaches for his phone and dials a
number from memory.

SPLIT SCREEN

Shorty Morty talks with agent Sy Gold, ancient and wise.

SHORTY MORTY (CONT'D)
Sy, Morty. Say, I'm going with
LaVonne for the part of the second
female lead.

SY
 (high, crackly voice)
 That'll be tough, Morty.

SHORTY MORTY
 Tough? Beef jerky is tough.

SY
 The female lead is a blonde.
 LaVonne is a blonde. It's not
 calculus, Morty. Glenna is a red.
 With a red bush to boot.

Morty abruptly hangs up.

He shakes his head.

He consults his Wheeldex and dials another number

SHORTY MORTY
 Paramount Studios? Lenny Shor
 please.

Waits.

SHORTY MORTY (CONT'D)
 When he comes in have him call
 Morty Rosenthal. CRestview 5-6000.
 It's important.

Morty replaces the receiver.

He cups his head in his hands and rocks back and forth.

He looks up as Katya pushes open his office door over the
 thick carpet.

LAVONNE VAN ROYALE, 35, enters on a cloud of Arpège.

She sits in a chrome and black leather chair and crosses one
 yard of stockinged calf over another yard of stockinged calf.
 She wears a hat with a pheasant feather curled like a
 scimitar that swipes at her head every time she moves.

CLOSE ON MORTY

as he rests his eyes on LaVonne.

BACK TO SCENE

SHORTY MORTY (CONT'D)
 (as in a dream)
 LaVonne. LaVonne van Royale.

CLOSE ON YVONNE

as she regards Morty as if he were a dusty armadillo in a cage in a curio shop along Route 66.

BACK TO SCENE

LAVONNE

Still walk on your desk?

SHORTY MORTY

Only when I think of you, LaVonne,
only for you.

LaVonne puckers red glossed lips and lights a cigarette, letting out a steady stream of smoke as if at a swarm of annoying midges.

LAVONNE

(lispng)

Try thinking of me leth.

SHORTY MORTY

RKO is very interested. You are interested in the part, LaVonne, aren't you? You're interested, right?

LAVONNE

Why didn't you tell me that Henna Glenna has a half-Nelson on the part?

Panic strikes Morty like a needle.

SHORTY MORTY

LaVonne, I just spoke with Sy. It's not in cement at Grauman's.

LAVONNE

And Sy told me an hour ago no blondes.

Morty waves his hands.

SHORTY MORTY

Not for sure, LaVonne, not for sure.

LaVonne uncrosses her legs.

LAVONNE

You're a phony, Morty.
(flicks ash)
And a shorty.

SHORTY MORTY

We'll find another part. A better
one. I left a message for Lenny
Shor over at Paramount. He owes me
big time.

LaVonne van Royale stands up and breaks her cigarette into a large ashtray.

She leans over Morty's desk, her scimitar trembling over Morty's head.

LAVONNE

I'm going back with Sharman and
Lewis.

Morty looks up at her as if he is going to be beheaded.

LaVonne turns and sweeps out of the office.

Stricken, Morty speaks to the closed door.

SHORTY MORTY

But I love you.

He sits without moving, staring straight ahead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OFFICE - EVENING

Morty is still sitting at his desk, staring straight ahead.

Finally, he sighs and gets up.

FOLLOW him INTO his bathroom.

He looks at himself in the mirror. Wipes a tear. Fusses with his comb over.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Morty is brushing his teeth dejectedly.

EXT. BATHROOM DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Morty comes out of the bathroom and walks over to his big window.

HIS POV - LIGHTS OF LOS ANGELES

stretch over miles of the city.

INT. OFFICE - DESK - NIGHT

Morty lies on his desk deep in thought, his hands behind his head.

SHORTY MORTY (V.O.)

First National is casting two comedies next month. Wait, Bud Adler is involved in that. He's still sore about what I said about his last picture.

Morty props an ankle on his knee.

SHORTY MORTY (V.O.)

Republic will have two westerns in pre-production soon. Christ! LaVonne can't ride a horse. I told her. Lavonne, just four Saturdays with Pacific Equestrian and any producer will be convinced you can ride. But no, she wouldn't listen.

He sits up.

SHORTY MORTY

(aloud to self)

Say, what about Sol Lugar over at Warner's? He owes you a favor. Yeah, but you know Sol. He likes perky not glamorous.

He lies back down.

SHORTY MORTY (CONT'D)

Morty, you've read stacks of photoplays. Why not write one yourself, as a showcase for LaVonne? Maybe a period costume drama?

INT. OFFICE - DESK - NIGHT

Shorty Morty is asleep on his desk.

RIPPLE DISSOLVE
TO:

DREAM SEQUENCE INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

LaVonne van Royale, Katya Smirnov and Sy Gold sit in orchestra chairs. Each holds a script.

Sy wears an outrageous red pompadour wig.

He holds out his script and reads from it through his bifocals.

SY

I could no more measure my love for
her than I could measure the
equator.

He looks at the two women.

SY (CONT'D)

Who wrote this shit?

KATYA

It sounds like something Morty
would write.

LAVONNE

Morty should stick to hith ten
percent.

Katya reads from her script.

KATYA

And she, my Lord, would lead an
expedition to the end of the earth
for you.

SY

To the end of the earth?

KATYA

This very morning she confessed
such a sweet thought to me.

LaVonne stands and takes two steps toward the others. She bows.

LAVONNE
 (man's deep voice,
 lisping)
 My Lord, the carriage is ready.
 Although there is sun, you should
 take your Inverneth nevertheleth.

Sy stands, tosses aside his script.

SY
 Enough of this silliness.

He puts his arms around the shoulders of the two women.

SY (CONT'D)
 Ladies, a proposal. An evening at
 Musso & Franks. Drinks. Good food.
 On me.

The two women AD LIB their agreement.

SY (CONT'D)
 LaVonne, you need to get your mind
 off the part at RKO.

LAVONNE
 It's easier to get my mind off
 Morty.

She puts her palms on either side of her head and closes her eyes.

LAVONNE (CONT'D)
 (beat)
 Who is Morty Rosenthal, by the way?

SY
 Hell if I know.

KATYA
 Never heard of him.

SY
 And Katya you need a break from
 Morty.

KATYA
 I need to break Morty's neck.

SY
 We'll be three close friends in a
 booth at Musso's.

Sy, his arms still around the shoulders of the two women, and LaVonne and Katya MOVE TOWARD CAMERA.

They do a simple soft shoe and sing their version of "Georgie Porgie".

SY/KATYA/LAVONNE

Shorty Morty, corned beef on rye,
kiss'd the girls and made them cry.
When the boys came out to play,
Shorty Morty ran away.

A MAN in slacks and rolled up shirt sleeves enters with a phone on a long extension cord.

Sy, Katya and LaVonne leave off their routine.

MAN

Paramount Studios calling for Mr.
Mortimer Rosenthal. Call for Mr.
Rosenthal. An important call for
Mr. Rosenthal. Is Mr. Rosenthal
here?

Sy, Katya and LaVonne cup their hands around their mouths and look about.

SY/KATYA/LAVONNE

Mr. Mortimer Rosenthal, are you
here?

SY

Oh, Mortimer. Yoo-hoo.

KATYA

Come to the damn phone, Morty.

LAVONNE

(lispig)

It's a call you should not mith.

MAN

Are you sure he isn't here? Mr.
Mortimer Rosenthal has an important
call from Paramount Studios.

LAVONNE/SY/KATYA

Paramount is calling, Mr.
Rosenthal. Paramount is calling,
Morty. You're dead if you miss this
call, Morty. You're dead. Shorty
Morty Rosenthal, you're dead.

MAN

Well, I guess he's dead then.

Man walks off camera.

Stricken, Shorty Morty runs into the room.

SHORTY MORTY

A call from Paramount? Am I too
late? Did I miss it?

Sy, Katya, and LaVonne strike a pose of rebuke and glower at Morty.

Then they resume their routine.

SY/KATYA/LAVONNE

Shorty Morty, please tell us why/
You kiss the girls and make them
cry/
Why d'you always run away/
When the boys come out to play?

Arm in arm the three skip to their exit.

SY/KATYA/LAVONNE (CONT'D)

Shorty Morty, oh so shorty/
Girls don't like you you're bald
and forty/
When the boys come out to play/
You always, always run away.

Morty stands motionless in the middle of the room.

Then he slowly turns about, his arms outstretched, calling in the direction where Sy, Katya, and LaVonne exited.

SHORTY MORTY

LaVonne? Sharman and Lewis? You
gotta be kidding. Sharman's got
ulcers and Lewis'll be eighty next
month. I know I'm a sawed-off agent
who walks on his desk. But without
you, LaVonne, I'm nothin'. You hear
me, LaVonne? I'm nothin'.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. OFFICE - DESK - DAY

Shorty Morty still lies asleep on his desk.

Suddenly he opens his eyes wide, caught between his dream/nightmare and the bare wall of another day without the love of LaVonne van Royale.

THE END